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— The annual meeting of the American Society for Psychical Research was held in Boston last week. After the opening remarks, Dr. Minot introduced Prof. H. P. Bowditch, who presented the report of the committee on thought transference. "Among the conditions possibly favorable to thought transference, supposing it to be a genuine phenomenon, the effect of a sudden and unexpected impression made on the mind of the agent seemed particularly worthy of investigation. For this purpose experiments were made in which a brilliantly illuminated figure or diagram could be suddenly displayed to the agent while sitting in a darkened room. The chairman of this committee, Mr. Hodgson, and Dr. W. S. Bigelow took part in these experiments, which were twenty or thirty in number, and conducted on different days in the month of July last. As absolutely no evidence of thought transference was obtained, the details of the experiments may be omitted. The suggestion made in the last report of this committee, that a drug might be discovered which by its action on the cerebral centres might favor thought transference, seemed also worth testing. For this purpose experiments were tried, with Mr. Hodgson acting both as agent and percipient while partially under the influence of ether, but the results differed in no respect from those obtained when he was in the normal state." In some other experiments made by Mr. Hodgson, Professor Bowditch added, there was a degree of success which warranted a continuation of the investigation. "It will be evident to those who have followed the work of the American Society thus far, that the attempt to obtain evidence as to the reality of 'thought transference' has been attended with very meagre results. If thought transference be a genuine psychological phenomenon, it is evident that the conditions favorable to its manifestation are not generally understood. Judging from our experience thus far, it would seem that an inquiring attitude of mind is certainly not one of these favoring circumstances." Other interesting reports to which the audience listened were those of the committee on experimental psychology, by Dr. Minot; the committee on apparitions and haunted houses, by Prof. Josiah Royce; the committee on hypnotic phenomena, by Mr. Charles B. Cory; and the committee on mediumistic phenomena, by Dr. W. N. Bullard.

— The reports of M. Larrieu, late missionary in China, who maintains that the great wall of China has never existed (*La Grande Muraille de Chine*, Paris, 1887), has been widely spread by the American daily papers. He claims that the wall consisted merely of watch-towers, built of earth and bricks, about twenty-five feet high and a thousand feet apart. In a few places they were connected by an embankment. He also says that the wall north of Peking and the palisades west of Sian-tung never existed. These views cannot be correct, as numerous travellers have seen the wall or its ruins. In regard to the palisades of Sian-tung, H. E. M. James, who recently visited Manchuria, says that at the present day they have disappeared entirely, though a mound or row of trees occasionally marks the place where they stood. The gateways, however, he found still maintained as customs-posts, at which transit duties are levied. Undoubtedly the wall consisted in many parts of earth, but there is no reason to maintain that it never existed.

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

\* \* Correspondents are requested to be as brief as possible. The writer's name is in all cases required as proof of good faith. Twenty copies of the number containing his communication will be furnished free to any correspondent on request. The editor will be glad to publish any queries consonant with the character of the journal.

#### Rock Specimens from Cumberland Sound, Baffin Land.

THE following specimens were collected by Mr. W. Whiting of the whaling-station of Messrs. Williams & Co., New London, Conn., on Umanaktuak, an island on the south-west coast of Cumberland Sound. The specimen No. 10 was found by an Eskimo on a hunting excursion, and sold as a curiosity to Mr. Whiting, from whom I received the specimens for examination.

1. *Boulder from the Bed of a Torrent Umanaktuak.*—Compact limestone, almost black, and somewhat argillaceous. It weathers dark gray, and shows on the surface slightly projecting, fine, parallel lines of stratification from one-quarter to one-half an inch apart. No trace of fossils can be detected, either by inspection

or in microscopic sections. Under the microscope it is seen to consist of gray, rounded, fine calcareous grains with a few black ones, all apparently deposited from water.

2. *South-west Corner, Umanaktuak.*—Graphite with rusty surfaces, and holding drusy white quartz.

3. *Same Locality.*—A decomposing black crystalline rock, which, on microscopic examination, proves to consist of graphite, with hornblende, a triclinic felspar, and a little quartz. It breaks into angular fragments along thin layers of graphite, which are sliken-sided, and give each one the appearance of a piece of this mineral alone.

4. *Little Hill (Kagodloaping), Umanaktuak.*—Hornblendic gneiss, of a rather coarse 'pepper-and-salt' appearance, consisting of about equal parts of quartz and felspar, forming the white portion, and of black hornblende with smaller quantities of brown mica, the dark.

5. *Big Hill, Umanaktuak, High Level.*—Light gray gneiss of medium texture, composed of about equal parts of orthoclase and quartz, with a subordinate proportion of fine scales of black mica. Occasional crystals of the felspar are much larger than the rest.

6. *Big Hill, Umanaktuak, Shore Line Eastward.*—Gray gneiss, consisting of layers of mixed orthoclase and quartz, alternating with others composed of scales of brown mica.

7. *Umanaktuak.*—Rusty mica-schist of medium texture, the quartz in small proportion.

8. *Vein in Umanaktuak.*—Translucent white vitreous quartz having exactly the appearance of alum.

9. *Umanaktuak.*—White rather coarsely crystalline felspar and quartz, with a few small scales of white mica, being a very light-colored variety of granite, apparently from a small vein.

10. *About 40 Miles Inland, in a South-Westerly Direction from Umanaktuak.*—Foliated graphite with rusty surfaces and partings.

11. *Umanaktuak.*—Vitreous translucent gray quartz with thin plates of brown mica traversing it in different directions.

These specimens indicate the ordinary Laurentian system, and are of much the same character as on the north side of Hudson Strait, where the rocks appear to be allied to those of the lower Ottawa valley, and to be somewhat nearer and more modified than the great mass of the Laurentian in the Hudson Bay territories.

Dr. ROBERT BELL,

Assistant Director Geological Survey of Canada.

Ottawa, Nov. 28,

#### 'Eskimo and the Indian.'

I WISH to add my voice to emphasize Dr. Boas's criticism of the method employed in Mr. Chamberlain's article with the above title. Though I should be sorry to hurt Mr. Chamberlain's feelings, I am obliged to say that there has been a great deal too much of the same sort of work done, and erroneous comparisons of this kind seem particularly alluring to those who attempt the study of the comparative philology of American languages on a large scale.

One reason for these errors is not far to seek. They of course are obliged to work with the published vocabularies of the Eskimo language. Now, as they have no knowledge of this language (and the number of those who have even an elementary knowledge of it, outside of the Danish settlers in Greenland, might almost be counted on the fingers), they are entirely unable to realize how bad most of those vocabularies are phonetically. Even the best of these, Dr. Rink's lately published comparative list of stem-words (see Dr. Boas's article in *Science*, Dec. 2), is written in the modern Greenlandic alphabet, which, in my opinion, masks many important phonetic relations, and they seem to have a sort of fatal instinct for getting hold of the oldest and least phonetic vocabularies. This is specially evident in Mr. Chamberlain's list of words. Dr. Boas has sufficiently disposed of the first table, but to show how misleading such things are, I have taken the trouble to go through his second list, taking such words as can be recognized as Eskimo words at all, and showing how their resemblances to the Indian words are due to a misapprehension of the real sound of the words. In expressing the sounds phonetically, I have used the alphabet employed by the Bureau of Ethnology in writing Indian languages, as the one with which I am most familiar. I think it will be sufficiently intelligible.